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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Information and outreach programme entitled "The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations"

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

On 23 December 2005, the General Assembly adopted resolution 60/225, on assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence, in which it recognized the numerous difficulties faced by survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly the orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence, many of whom have HIV or AIDS. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a programme of outreach entitled "The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations" to mobilize civil society for Rwanda genocide victim remembrance and education, in order to help prevent future acts of genocide.

The responsibility for developing the information and outreach campaign has been assigned to the Department of Public Information which is utilizing its existing partnerships among civil society and non-governmental organizations, as well as forging new relationships with groups working on human rights, genocide and women's development issues, particularly those in the Great Lakes region and Rwanda.

The present report, prepared in response to resolution 60/225, outlines work that has been done to establish the programme in the first six months of its mandate, including the identification of communications goals and the themes that will be used to guide various activities. The programme is being implemented in coordination with other programmes of the Department and the United Nations Communications Group, particularly the Africa-based programmes of the United Nations system, in consultation with interested Member States, including the Government of Rwanda.

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I. Introduction

1. On 23 December 2005, the General Assembly, by its resolution 60/225, on assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence, recognized the numerous difficulties faced by survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly the orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence, many of whom have HIV or AIDS, and urged Member States to develop educational programmes that would inculcate future generations with the lessons of the genocide in Rwanda in order to help prevent future acts of genocide.

2. In paragraph 5 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish a programme of outreach entitled "The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations" as well as measures to mobilize civil society for Rwanda genocide victim remembrance and education, in order to help prevent future acts of genocide.

3. The present report is written in response to the request, also in paragraph 5, to the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on the establishment of the programme within six months from the date of the adoption of the resolution.

II. The goals of the programme

4. The responsibility for developing the information and outreach campaign has been assigned to the Department of Public Information. The Department is utilizing its existing partnerships among civil society and non-governmental organizations, as well as forging new relationships with groups working on human rights, genocide and women's development issues, particularly those in the Great Lakes region and Rwanda. The programme is being implemented in coordination with other programmes of the Department and the United Nations Communications Group, particularly the Africa-based programmes of the United Nations system, and in consultation with interested Member States, including the Government of Rwanda.

5. The resolution identifies the major information goals for the programme: the mobilization of civil society for genocide victim remembrance and education to help prevent future acts of genocide. In order to realize those goals, the programme is focusing on two key themes: (a) the prevention of genocide, especially the responsibility to protect, and (b) genocide victim remembrance with an emphasis on the impact of genocide on women, including victims of sexual violence.

A. Prevention of genocide

6. The active engagement of national and local media, civil society and non-governmental groups is vital for raising awareness about preventing genocide, protecting vulnerable populations, and holding Governments responsible for stopping genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The massacre of some 800,000 Rwandans in 1994 provides a stark reminder of the dangers of inaction and highlights the responsibility of all actors to take timely action to prevent future genocides anywhere in the world. The world community as a whole, by learning the lessons of Rwanda, will be better equipped to avert similar tragedies in the future. The lessons of Rwanda underline the importance for the United Nations and the rest

of the world to promote democracy, tolerance and peace; to take action at the first signs of massive human rights abuses; to bring to justice those guilty of crimes against humanity; and to shoulder the obligation to protect civilians wherever they are under threat. Members of civil society and non-governmental groups can learn to recognize the stages of genocide as early warning signs and to sound the alarm before situations become violent.

7. In working to promote education and awareness about genocide, the Department is reaching out to create partnerships with organizations already active in these issues. There are relatively few non-governmental organizations and civil society groups dedicated to work on the prevention of genocide. International groups such as Genocide Watch, Human Rights Watch and the International Centre for Transitional Justice have indicated a willingness to work with the Department. The Department is identifying national and local groups which can be partners on this programme and is exploring ways to work in Rwanda with the public information office of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

8. The Department is also working with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the prevention of genocide to enhance awareness of the need for action. The recent announcement of a committee of experts that will support the Special Adviser offers the Department additional opportunities to promote awareness, utilizing those experts in the outreach campaign. The Department is also seeking to raise awareness of protections afforded by international human rights and humanitarian agreements and is actively engaging with media and human rights organizations in Africa on this issue.

B. Genocide victim remembrance and the impact of genocide on women, including victims of sexual violence

9. In resolution 60/225, the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to mobilize civil society for Rwanda genocide victim remembrance and education as a way of generating support and assistance for widows, orphans and victims of sexual violence, who continue to suffer the consequences of the genocide more than a decade after the events.

10. Women bore the brunt of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Many lost their husbands, some 250,000 were raped and perhaps 70 per cent of those were infected by HIV and AIDS. According to the 1996 report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Rwanda, Rene Degni-Segui, between 2,000 and 5,000 women became pregnant as a result of rape. Many women went on to raise those children in an environment hostile to their situation.

11. The Department has identified a number of international and regional non-governmental organizations working on issues relating to women, violence and HIV and AIDS as partners in this outreach programme. By collaborating with groups that have an extensive network and presence in the Great Lakes region, the Department aims to raise awareness of the broader impact of the 1994 genocide, especially in terms of the destabilization of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and its continuing impact on women.

III. The programme

12. The Department is working to achieve both of the information goals set out above, by ensuring that it complements and does not duplicate the efforts of others. The key elements of the programme include:

(a) Using major dates, including the anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, to work with the media to raise awareness and further the information goals of the programme;

(b) Working with the Department's global network of United Nations information centres, United Nations political offices and the information components of United Nations peacekeeping missions, particularly in the Great Lakes region, to organize local events in support of both information goals;

(c) Organizing expert briefings in the field and at Headquarters in order to raise the level of understanding and media attention about genocide and the need to take early action to prevent it;

(d) Preparation of information materials, including background papers, feature articles and press releases, as well as DVDs, to be used in educational outreach in the field. These will address topics such as the prevention of genocide, particularly with regard to early warning signs and early prevention mechanisms. As appropriate, these will be distributed to the media, posted on the website (see below) and/or published in the United Nations magazine, *Africa Renewal*;

(e) Organizing the no-cost loan of films for use in events organized by United Nations information centres and other United Nations offices in the Great Lakes region for non-governmental organizations, other civil society groups and the media in order to raise awareness locally;

(f) Organizing a photographic exhibit that depicts the long-term impact of genocide on women and children, to be mounted at United Nations Headquarters and then travel to key United Nations information centres, as a way of raising awareness;

(g) Creating a website on the Rwanda genocide and the United Nations that will serve as an information hub on the work of the United Nations and its partners in the two theme areas, for non-governmental groups as well as civil society, including students, academics, activists and the media working on the prevention of genocide, in genocide studies, or on the long-term impact of genocide. The website will contain background information materials; notes from briefings and panel discussions; official United Nations reports and information materials such as statements by the Secretary-General and the Office of his Special Adviser on the prevention of genocide; and webcasts of events held by the United Nations as part of the programme "The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations";

(h) Working with the Department's audio-visual programmes to promote the goals of the programme "The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations". These include United Nations Radio; United Nations Television, including UNIFEED, television feature stories highlighting the work of United Nations agencies that is sent daily to major broadcast subscribers worldwide; the United Nations News Centre; *UN Chronicle* and *Africa Renewal* magazines.

IV. Report on activities undertaken from January to May 2006

13. The Department of Public Information launched the two-year information and outreach programme, "The Rwanda Genocide and the United Nations", with activities conducted over three days at United Nations Headquarters, from 5 to 7 April, and simultaneously in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Czech Republic, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Namibia, Panama, the Russian Federation, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The events coincided with the twelfth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda.

14. The campaign opened on 5 April at Headquarters with a screening of the highly acclaimed film, *Shooting Dogs* (BBC Films), which had been positively received in Rwanda following its premiere at Kigali on 28 March. On 6 April, the Department held a round table with genocide experts and survivors of genocide to raise the question, "Whose responsibility is it to protect civilians from genocide?".

15. The round table was attended by over 240 people. Among the invited guests were more than 100 representatives of United Nations-accredited non-governmental organizations, 50 other non-governmental organizations specializing in genocide and related human rights issues and 40 major media, including a number based in Africa. The event, now archived on the United Nations website, can be viewed at http://www.un.org/webcast/2006.html.

16. On 7 April, on the twelfth anniversary itself, the Special Adviser on the prevention of genocide gave a press briefing organized by the Department at United Nations Headquarters. He discussed the genocide in Rwanda and also focused on Darfur. Leading up to the anniversary, the Department worked with the Special Adviser to place an opinion article in 14 key news media in 11 countries (Austria, Egypt, France, Germany, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Italy, Japan, Portugal, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania and United States of America).

17. Radio and television programmes were produced and disseminated by United Nations Radio, United Nations Television's UNIFEED (see above) and the News Centre. The Special Adviser's press briefing received good coverage with more than 120 media pickups worldwide. A DVD of the event is being prepared for educational purposes and will facilitate efforts to raise awareness among civil society and non-governmental groups in the field.

18. A key role in the Department's outreach efforts is played by its network of United Nations information centres. They organized local activities to explain the major issues of the campaign, using films and information materials produced by the Department. They also engaged in outreach to local media and non-governmental organizations. Other activities included debates on issues relating to genocide on national television; student debates at universities, exhibitions (photographs, posters and extracts of films on the genocide in Rwanda); and a lecture on the genocide to school students.

19. On 31 May, the Department took advantage of the presence in New York of a large number of non-governmental organizations working with women and children affected by genocide, some based in Rwanda. With the participation of UNIFEM and other United Nations programmes working with women in the Great Lakes region, a moderated interactive event was held to review what is being done to support women affected by genocide in Africa, and what more needs to be done.

20. Participants included representatives of non-governmental organizations, media, experts, and a number of funding agencies. The event created an environment to discuss key issues and to propose new initiatives that will directly benefit the survivors of the genocide in Rwanda, as well as women similarly affected in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Darfur.

V. Conclusion

21. The information and outreach programme requested by the General Assembly in resolution 60/225 will play a key role over the next two years in helping to mobilize civil society for genocide victim remembrance and education in order to prevent future acts of genocide, particularly in Africa.

22. By focusing on the two key themes of the outreach programme — the prevention of genocide, especially the responsibility to protect, and genocide victim remembrance with an emphasis on the impact of genocide on women, including victims of sexual violence — the programme aims to raise the awareness of civil society and the public at large of the need to learn how to recognize, at the earliest possible stages, the danger signs associated with genocide, and to seek help early to prevent its further development. It is envisaged that by the conclusion of the two-year period awareness among media and civil society of the continuing impact of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda will be much higher.

23. In implementing the programme, the Department will depend, in part, on its existing partnerships with civil society and non-governmental organizations. It will also build new relationships with groups working in the Great Lakes region and Rwanda. The Department aims to achieve the information goals of the programme by ensuring that it complements, and does not duplicate the efforts of others.